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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dreamboard Member Sentenced to 45 Years in Prison for Participating in International Criminal Network Organized to Sexually Exploit Children

A Massachusetts man was sentenced today to serve 45 years in prison for his participation in an international criminal network, known as Dreamboard, dedicated to the sexual abuse of children and the creation and dissemination of graphic images and videos of child sexual abuse throughout the world, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Stephanie Finley of the Western District of Louisiana and Raymond R. Parmer, Special Agent In Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in New Orleans.

David Ettlinger, aka ?eel,? 35, of Newton, Mass., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Maurice Hicks in the Western District of Louisiana. In addition to his prison term, Ettlinger was sentenced to lifetime supervised release.

?David Ettlinger will spend 45 years in prison for his role in a horrific international conspiracy to sexually exploit young children,? said Assistant Attorney General Breuer. ? Ettlinger participated in a criminal online community that encouraged members to regularly produce content depicting extreme sexual abuse of children. The members of Dreamboard attempted to evade law enforcement by disguising their locations, but today?s sentencing is a strong reminder that the department is dedicated to working with its law enforcement partners to track down child predators who seek to take advantage of our most vulnerable citizens.?

U.S. Attorney Finley said, ?Sexual abuse is a growing problem around the world, and it has devastating consequences for the victimized children. Child pornography on the internet is another growing problem. In addition to the abuse these children suffer, images of the abuse circulate worldwide across the internet for many years, repeating the abuse. Children should not be victims. This sentence sends a strong message to people who abuse children that they will pay a heavy price for their actions. My office, along with our federal, state and local partners, remains committed to protecting children by aggressively pursuing, prosecuting and punishing those who seek to exploit them.?

?The sexual abuse of an innocent child by a teacher is one of the most heartbreaking violations of trust imaginable,? said HSI New Orleans Special Agent in Charge Parmer. ? Investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes is one of our highest priorities and today?s sentencing ensures this predator will never again have the opportunity to harm another child.?

On Aug. 15, 2012, Ettlinger pleaded guilty to one count of engaging in a child exploitation enterprise. Evidence presented in court documents and at sentencing revealed that Ettlinger, a former elementary school teacher in Newton, Mass., had been an active member of Dreamboard, an online child pornography bulletin board, since 2009.

Ettlinger was charged in an indictment unsealed on Aug. 3, 2011. The charges against Ettlinger are the result of Operation Delego, an ongoing investigation launched in December 2009 that targeted individuals around the world for their participation in Dreamboard. Dreamboard was a private, members-only, online bulletin board that was created and operated to promote pedophilia and encourage the sexual abuse of very young children, in an environment designed to avoid law enforcement detection.

A total of 72 individuals, including Ettlinger, have been charged as a result of Operation Delego. To date, 57 of the 72 charged defendants have been arrested in the United States and abroad. Forty-five individuals have pleaded guilty, and one was convicted after trial. Forty-two of the 45 individuals who have pleaded guilty for their roles in the conspiracy

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have been sentenced to prison and have received sentences ranging between 10 years and life in prison. Fifteen of the 72 charged individuals remain at large and are known only by their online identities. Efforts to identify and apprehend these individuals continue. Operation Delego represents the largest prosecution to date in the United States of individuals who participated in an online bulletin board conceived and operated for the sole purpose of promoting child sexual abuse, disseminating child pornography and evading law enforcement.

Ettlinger and other Dreamboard members traded graphic images and videos of adults molesting children 12 years-old and under, often violently, and collectively created a massive private library of images of child sexual abuse. The international group prized and encouraged the creation of new images and videos of child sexual abuse.

Dreamboard members employed a variety of measures designed to conceal their criminal activity from detection by law enforcement. Members communicated using aliases or ? screen names,? rather than their actual names. Links to child pornography posted on Dreamboard were required to be encrypted with a password that was shared only with other members. Members accessed the board via proxy servers, which routed internet traffic through other computers so as to disguise a user's actual location and prevent law enforcement from tracing internet activity. Dreamboard members also encouraged the use of encryption programs on their computers, which password-protect computer files to prevent law enforcement from accessing them in the event of a court-authorized search.

Membership was tightly controlled by the administrators of the bulletin board, who required prospective members to upload child pornography portraying children 12 years of age or younger when applying for membership. Once they were given access, members were required continually to upload images of child sexual abuse in order to maintain membership. Members who failed to follow this rule would be expelled from the group.

Operation Delego involved extensive international cooperation to identify and apprehend Dreamboard members abroad. Through coordination between ICE; the Department of Justice; Eurojust, the European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit; and dozens of law enforcement agencies throughout the world, 20 Dreamboard members across five continents and 14 countries have been arrested to date outside the United States, including two of the five lead administrators of the board. Those countries include Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Qatar, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. Numerous foreign investigations related to Operation Delego remain ongoing. The location and arrest of Dreamboard members abroad have led to the capture and investigation of other global targets.

Evidence obtained during the operation revealed that at least 38 children across the world were suffering sexual abuse at the hands of the members of the group. Efforts by federal, state, local and international law enforcement to locate and identify the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation by Dreamboard members are ongoing.

Operation Delego is a spinoff investigation from leads developed through ?Operation Nest Egg,? the prosecution of another online group dedicated to the sharing and dissemination of child pornography. Operation Nest Egg was a spinoff investigation developed from leads related to another international investigation, ?Operation Joint Hammer,? which targeted transnational rings of child pornography trafficking.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafchildhood.gov.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John ?Luke? Walker of the Western District of Louisiana and Trial Attorney Keith Becker of CEOS. The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs provided substantial assistance. The investigation was conducted by ICE-Homeland Security Investigations, the Child Exploitation Section of ICE's Cyber Crime Center, CEOS, CEOS's High Technology Investigative Unit and 35 ICE offices in the United States and 11 ICE attaches offices in 13 countries around the world, with assistance provided by numerous local and international law enforcement agencies across the United States and throughout the world.

The investigation was part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to identify, investigate and arrest those who prey on children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers and foreign-national predators whose crimes make them deportable.



ICE encourages the public to report suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

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Criminal Division

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